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Sacred Songs of Khoja Muslims: Sounded and Embodied Liturgy and Devotion

AMY CATLIN-JAIRAZBHOY / University of California, Los Angeles

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Music has long been recognized as a controversial topic in Islamic thought (see, e.g., Farmer 1929; Shiloah 1995:31–44; and During 2002). The ongoing debate on music stems not from statements in the Quran, but rather from *hadīth* or remembered statements attributed to the Prophet and collected during Islamic law's formative period. Despite abiding ambivalence and orthodox condemnation, musical expression flourishes in a wide variety of forms within many Islamic societies. A prime regional exemplar of global pluralism in Islam, the South Asian Muslim world has exhibited a broad spectrum of responses to the debate on music (see, e.g., Jairazbhoy 1968; Qureshi 1972). These range from a complete rejection of all forms of music save the recitation of the Quran (not considered as "music") to acceptance of a large body of quasi-liturgical and non-liturgical forms of sung, danced, and played expressions of devotion.

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Music has long been recognized as a controversial topic in Islamic thought (see, e.g., Farmer 1929; Shiloah 1995:31–44; and During 2002). The ongoing debate on music stems not from statements in the Quran, but rather from *hadīth* or remembered statements attributed to the Prophet and collected during Islamic law's formative period. Despite abiding ambivalence and orthodox condemnation, musical expression flourishes in a wide variety of forms within many Islamic societies. A prime regional exemplar of global pluralism in Islam, the South Asian Muslim world has exhibited a broad spectrum of responses to the debate on music (see, e.g., Jairazbhoy 1968; Qureshi 1972). These range from a complete rejection of all forms of music save the recitation of the Quran (not considered as "music") to acceptance of a large body of quasi-liturgical and non-liturgical forms of sung, danced, and played expressions of devotion.

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Historical Context

Satpanth Isma'ilis, more commonly known as Khojas (Khojās), are South Asian descendants of converts to the Nizari branch of Shi'a Isma'ilism [1] (Shia Ismailism). They constitute a subgroup of a larger community known to others throughout the world as Aga Khanis, or Isma'ilis, who number around fifteen million. The term "Khoja" derives from the Persian title of respect, *khwājā,* meaning lord or master, believed to have been bestowed by Isma'ili teachers upon their converts in South Asia.[2] Because of the unique syncretism of their beliefs and practices, and the secrecy with which they generally maintained them, the Khojas have at times in the past been variously characterized by others as Hinduized Muslims, Islamicized Hindus, mystics, or pacifists, and they have remained little understood by outsiders. Isma'ilis belong to a branch of Shi'ism that follows the divinely-inspired leadership of a succession of Imams (especially Isma'il and Nizar) acclaimed as direct descendants of the Prophet Mohammad through his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali, a cousin of the Prophet. Like other Shi'as, Isma'ilis believe that Ali was selected by the Prophet as his successor.[3] The forty-ninth Imam of the Shi'a Imami Isma'ili Muslims is the present Aga Khan, His Highness Prince Karim al-Husayni Aga Khan IV (b. 1936). He leads his followers, found throughout South Asia, Central Asia, China, East Africa, and the West,[4] in spiritual as well as worldly affairs, including the direction of international agencies dedicated to such issues as education, women's rights, and self-sustainable development.[5] Of particular interest to ethnomusicologists is the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, whose Music Initiative in Central Asia sponsors research and preservation of Central Asian traditional music, and was a major creative partner and fiscal sponsor of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in 2002, *The Silk Road.*[6]

Research on the practices of this community can be difficult, especially for outsiders, in part because of the tradition of *taqiyah* (dissimulation, secrecy) necessitated by centuries of persecution from surrounding mainstream Muslim communities who did not condone divergences from hadīth-based orthodoxy, such as Hindu-Muslim syncretism. Indeed, a not inconsiderable reason for the concealment of practices directly concerns the gināns, whose musical delivery, quasi-scriptural status, and syncretic or even overtly Hindu aspects are incongruous with orthodox Islamic beliefs. Some Khojas regard the gināns as equivalent to the Vedas, and at least one ginān describes the Quran itself as the fifth Veda (Kassam 1995:108, 123); at times in the past, the gināns have even appeared to challenge the primacy of the Quran (Hollister 1953:381–82). Partly due to mainstream Muslim hostility to such beliefs, the religion remains rather inaccessible today, accepting converts rarely, most typically in cases of marriage into the community.[7] Thus it has

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functioned somewhat like a hereditary caste in terms of kinship, and to some extent occupationally as well, as many Khojas until the mid-twentieth century have been business people, and have since entered the international arena in many other fields.[8] As one of South Asia's more Westernized and progressive communities, Khojas are prominent in many fields throughout the world, including diplomacy and scholarship.[9] The few outsiders who have conducted research on their religion have relied primarily on written sources, while published materials on contemporary practices have been produced virtually exclusively by community members, mostly circulated internally.[10] However, under the present Aga Khan's progressive guidance, access to information about the community has increased, and there are now many Isma'ili websites where even gināns are featured.[11] Thus, after a dearth of published recordings until recently, cassette technology and the Internet have played important roles in the opening of this repertoire to the world, facilitating research immensely.

The Music Connection

How did this Islamic community acquire its noteworthy involvement with music? The answer to this question may lie in the adaptive strategies devised by Isma'ili proselytizers who started coming to the subcontinent in the ninth century. These missionaries, or *dāis,* were sent eastward from Yemen, Syria, and Persia to Sindh and beyond to teach Isma'ili Islam. They were especially active in South Asian regions such as Sindh, Punjab, Multan, Gujarat, Kacch, Kathiawad, Malwa, Kashmir, and Rajasthan, at the same time as were Sufis. It is understood by most Khojas today that the dāis used local vernaculars to compose hymns, each with the divine authority of his Imam, in order to communicate with the Hindu populations in these areas. Their texts still survive in oral and in written forms, composed in various Indian languages, including Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Saraiki, Kacchi, and Sindhi, with loan words from Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit. Today, they still form the basis of the Khoja liturgy, and share many musical and textual traits with the pan-Indian saint-singer tradition of vernacular devotional literature, as well as with vernacular Sufi poetry (Asani 1992:103). For example, as in the sung poetry of the Sufi saints and Hindu devotional *bhakti* saints, the themes of the female soul longing for the divine male lover, the primacy of love and emotion over religious intellectualism, and the symbolic use of nature, folklore, and agriculture suffuse many mystical hymns (Asani 1991:15). Moreover, the songs are often sung in identifiable classical North Indian rāgs, which are also indicated in some printed collections, and recognized by those performers versed in classical music.

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Liturgical and Non-Liturgical Devotion: The Khoja Ginān

Khoja religious songs are known as ginān, usually translated as "knowledge" or "wisdom" and said to be derived from Sanskrit *jnāna,* or "knowledge," pronounced *gyān* in Hindi. This widely-accepted etymology supports the shared belief that gināns are expressions of esoteric meanings in the Quran and in Khoja Isma'ili thought (Asani 1991:2–3), and this indeed is the way the word is used in the texts of the gināns. However, as suggested by Kassam (1995:1), there is a possible relationship of ginān to the Arabic word, *ghinā',* meaning "singing,"[12] and to the Urdu/Hindu word *gānā,* "song" or "to sing." The word *ghinā* itself also had at least an obscure or archaic presence in the Urdu lexicon, being included in Platts' Urdu dictionary of 1884 (p. 773). Gināns may be sung in liturgical contexts, that is, in formal religious rites, as well as for private devotion outside ritual contexts. The songs often have an ethereal quality, projecting a subtle ecstasy very different from that evoked by many rhythmically-insistent Hindu *bhajans* or Muslim *qawwālis.* Nazir Jairazbhoy (1999) has characterized these two forms of musically-induced ecstasy as "subtle" and "heavy," respectively.

Some gināns are narrative in form, and contain descriptions of the teachers, or dāis, preaching through their sung poetry (Asani 1991:2–3). Each hymn typically ends with an attribution to a particular *pīr,* or saint-teacher, who was appointed by the Imam.[13] Many Khojas believe that the current versions of the songs represent their original words and even melodies, although others have challenged such claims.[14] The texts combine South Asian philosophical, religious, and mystical notions related to local Hindu, Sufi, Sikh, and Tantric traditions, even referring to Hindu deities. Originally appearing to address a largely Vaishnavite[15] audience, they proposed an evolutionary justification of Isma'ili Islam as a development out of Hinduism, with Ali propounded as the tenth incarnation (*avatār*) of Vishnu, and similarly amalgamating many other Hindu and Muslim beliefs.

The gināns constitute a huge repertoire of sung literature, ranging in length from a few verses to entire books, referred to by the Hindi/Sanskrit term *granth,* of up to four hundred verses. Originally assumed to be an oral tradition, the first gināns to be credited to an individual are attributed to Pir Satgur Nur, dated variously between the ninth and twelfth centuries.[16] The vast majority of the gināns are attributed to four other figures dating from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries.[17] Although there is evidence supporting the theory that these texts were written at least as early as the sixteenth century, it is from the early eighteenth century that the oldest extant manuscripts still exist, many preserved in the Institute for Isma'ili Studies Archives in London.[18] Others were destroyed in the early twentieth century during

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the process of standardization (Kassam 1995:88; Asani 1996:268–69). A large number were written in the Khojki script unique to the Khoja community, formerly a secret alphabet with Gujarati and Arabic elements that has few readers today.[19] The entire corpus of gināns has been estimated at nearly one thousand works, of which perhaps less than a tenth have been edited, translated, or analyzed (Kassam 1995:2). The last of the gināns were composed by Sayyids from the sixteenth until the early twentieth century.[20] Thus, the liturgical role of gināns as a fixed body of compositions appears to have emerged by the early twentieth century. Ali Asani (p.c.) states,

> I feel that the emergence of the notion of the gināns as a closed corpus with scriptural and liturgical functions is intimately connected with the emergence of a consolidated sense of communal identity among the Khojas in the early twentieth century. In the distant past in the pre-modern period, I think these songs were primarily used in non-liturgical contexts. Therefore from my perspective, the boundary between liturgical and non-liturgical is fluid and can change over time.

I first began to look at the melodic materials of the gināns partly in order to search for archaic survivals that might elucidate some dark corners of rāg history. Indeed, depending on the ability and background of the vocalist, some renditions are highly sophisticated and show clear affinities to the South Asian classical rāg and tāl system, using a wide variety of tune types. Since South Asian melodic styles were adopted along with local languages, I wondered whether the retention of Arabic and Persian words might have parallels in the retention of Arabic and Persian musical elements, such as tetrachordal tonal structure, or at least a pre-drone melodic structure that must have preceded the drone-based rāg structure prevailing in South Asia today. These elements are suggested in some of the recordings, including highly melismatic, unmetered styles (also similar to *rāg ālāp*), and the prominence of modes using the augmented second between scale degrees two and three (as in the Arab maqām Hijāz), and, occasionally six and seven (as in Hijāzkār). These scales, which for example, correspond to Bhairav ṭhāṭ (scale-type) of Hindustani music, are believed by some scholars to have been imported into India from the Near East. Jairazbhoy (1971:94) postulated that the Bhairav scale entered South India from Persia or Arabia under the name of Hejuji (cf. the Arabian mode and region Hijāz), and was later adopted in North India, where it acquired the name Bhairav from a rāg that was losing prominence (see also Jones [1796] 1990:135).

Of possible Near Eastern influence is the mode used in a rendition of the ginān, "Gur āp nade la page lagi mamavo" by Pir Sadruddin,[21] which corresponds roughly to Hijāz maqām and to the relatively rare Hindustani rāg Vasant Mukhāri. All have lowered second, sixth, and seventh degrees, and

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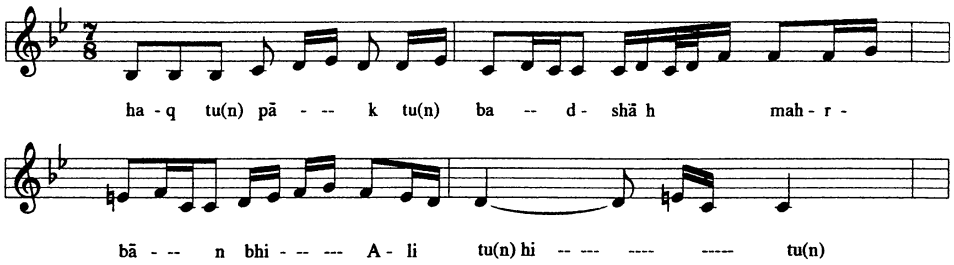
feature augmented seconds between degrees two and three. This rāg is a modern addition to Hindusthani classical music, evidently borrowed from its namesake in Karnatak music.[22] However, it is also quite possible that this ginān melody might have been inspired by the Arabic Hijāz or the Persian dastgāh Homāyūn, whose tonal materials it closely resembles. It could have entered the ginān repertoire recently through the process of Islamization, or perhaps more accurately, musical Arabization or Persianization, processes that have affected other aspects of the religion in South Asia and beyond (see Qureshi 2000:747–48).

Probably the earliest ginān recordings were made by Arnold Bake in Karachi in 1939. These as yet unpublished field recordings were each sung individually by teenaged boys, presumably found at the Karachi *jama'at* (community) school.[23] They are especially remarkable because one is stated to be sung in Persian, the first such example known to ginān scholars at the Institute of Isma'ili Studies, London.[24] The other songs are in the mixed language of gināns, including elements of Urdu, Gujarati, Sindhi, Persian, and other languages.

One of Bake's five recordings is "Haq tuṇ pāk tuṇ"("You are true, you are pure") a very popular ginān, usually taught first in the religious schools. It is a song in praise of Hazrat Ali and is attributed to the thirteenth century Hazrat Pir Shams al-Din Sabzawari.[25] This rendition is sung in a metrical cycle of seven beats (three plus four), popular throughout South Asia in classical, light-classical, and folk music. Its begins in a tonal structure compatible with the popular rāg Kāfi, with lowered third and seventh degrees, or E flat and B flat, and uses the occasional characteristic Kāfi-esque raised third degree (E natural). Yet it follows an unusual melodic logic ending outside the rāg, with the raised third degree. Figure 1 shows the refrain of this version. (All transcriptions here are transposed to C.)

Figure 1. "Haq tūṅ pāk tūṅ," recorded by Arnold Bake in 1939.



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The text of this song is as follows[26]:

Haq tūṇ pāk tūṇ, bādshāh
Maherbān bhī Ali tūṇ hī tūṇ
Rab tūṇ Rahmān tūṇ
Ali aval ākhar qāzi tūṇ hī tūṇ
Teṇ upāyā te nipāyā
Sirjaṇhār bhi Ali tūṇhi tūṇ
Jal thal mūl manḍanhārnā
Ali hukam terā bhi tūṇ hī tūṇ
Teri dostī meṇ bolyā Pir Shams
Maiṇ bandā terā yā Ali tūṇ hī tūṇ

You are the lord, you are merciful
Ali you indeed are the first and eternal, the judge
You are the originator and protector
Ali, you are indeed the creator
You provided the roots of water and earth
Ali, it is your command, it is indeed yours
Pir Shams speaks to you in friendship
I am devoted you indeed, oh Ali!

Three recently published recordings of this ginān, two of which are shown here as Figures 2 and 3,[27] each show melodic and metrical stylistic variations, but the mode and melodic logic are consistent with the Bake recording, despite the sixty-year hiatus and the geographic spread of six hundred miles and beyond into cyberspace. Indeed, rather than insisting on

Figure 2. "Haq tūṅ pāk tūṅ," performed by Zarina Kamaluddin and Imtiaz R. Umatiya. From *Ginans in Traditional Tunes, Volume 9.* ITREB Ginan Group of Pakistan, December 1995

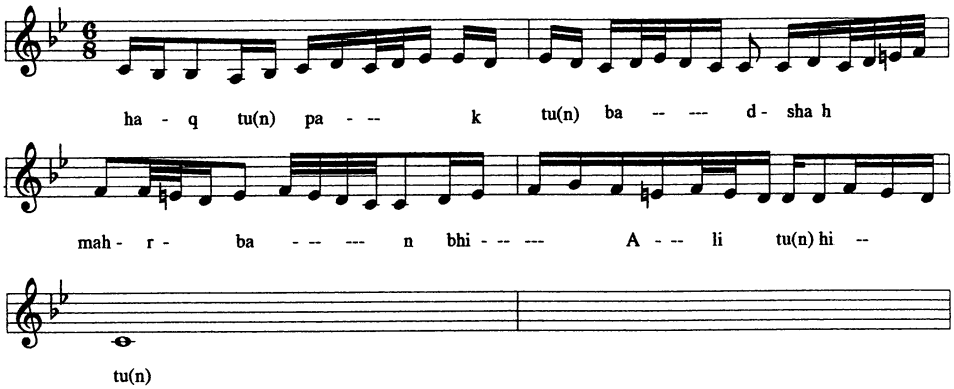

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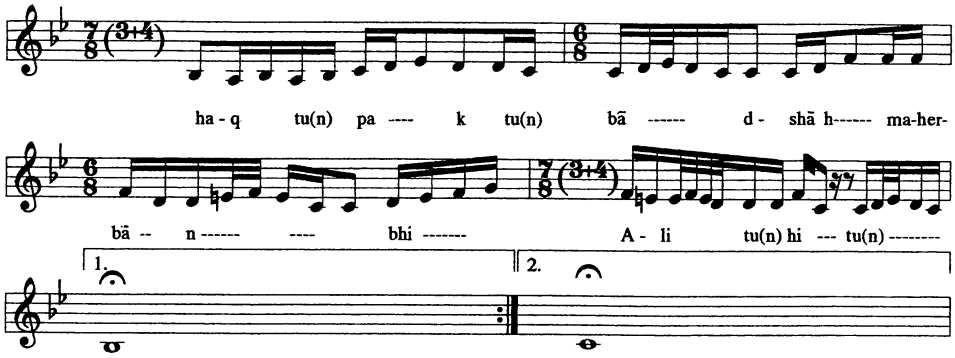
Figure 3. "Haq tūṅ pāk tūṅ," performed on *Ginān-e-Sharif* Cassette 1. Tariqa Board Mumbai (n.d.).



melodic uniformity, some Khojas say they appreciate hearing different musical renditions of a familar ginān.[28] But others, as discussed below, strive for musical standardization, just as the early twentieth century saw a movement to standardize the texts of gināns. Figure 3, from Bombay, uses a highly unconventional alternation of seven- and six-beat cycles, perhaps representing a compromise between the two versions recorded in Pakistan.

Liturgical Contexts

Gināns are sung communally and unaccompanied within the daily rituals held in community prayer halls, called *jama'at-khānahs,* and thus they should be regarded as liturgical music in that context. Congregating during the hours of darkness is a longstanding tradition for the daily rituals, not only because those times are believed to be the best for meditation, but perhaps also because of the tradition of secrecy. Thus, the two daily communal settings are held before sunrise (*prabhātiyā*) and after sunset (*sānji*) in the brightly-lit communal prayer hall. The daily gatherings at 4:00 a.m. are described as being especially uplifting and ethereal, featuring special gināns that relate to mystical and esoteric practices, particularly prior to the morning meditation. Just before sunset and the beginning of the evening rituals, worshippers gradually enter the building, remove their shoes, and walk into the prayer hall.[29] They seat themselves for silent prayer on woven mats facing a *pāṭh,* a low table covered in white, behind which the dignitaries of the jama'at (*mukhi,* the male leader, often with his wife the *mukhiyāni,* and other officers) gradually seat themselves on mats facing the congregation. Men and women appear to participate equally in all roles in the ritual proceedings. Any member may walk up to the table to greet the officiants, collect a few shelled peanuts or roasted *chana* beans, and offer them individu-

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ally to officiants and congregation, while establishing eye contact and uttering appropriate Isma'ili greetings. These actions seem to function both as socialization and as symbolic sanctification of the act of exchange: giving, receiving, feeding, and being fed. An informal silence forms a major part of the ritual soundscape. Quranic recitation and the reading of *farmāns* (announcements, proclamations) from the Aga Khan constitute a considerable part of the ritual. But at one or more stages, a ginān is recited by a person previously agreed upon by the officials. He or she comes forward to sit at the pāṭh and recites a ginān, sometimes using a microphone, joined by the congregation especially during the refrains. It is considered best to sing from memory, because they say using a written text inhibits spontaneity of feelings, and emotional expression is at the heart of ginān recitation. Special gināns are recited on special days, but generally the choice is left up to the reciter. After the final prayers and blessings, food and other items donated to the jama'at are auctioned for cash in what may function symbolically as a sanctification of commerce, a traditional occupation of the Khoja community.

Non-liturgical Contexts

The home is another natural context for ginān performance, during oral transmission among families and friends, sometimes using manuscripts, notebooks, or published volumes, usually in Gujarati. Women also recite alone or in small groups while performing household chores, and both men and women recite in the home during private devotions (Gulshakar Sukhiyani, p.c.). Gināns are also taught in religious classes that started in the early twentieth century in Bombay and Karachi, often using published texts and, eventually, audio recordings, a few of which are available on websites and in community shops. The *ginān-e-mehfil* is a gathering outside the jama'at-khānah, often in a private home, where singers and instrumentalists join to perform solo or unison choral renditions of gināns along with instrumental accompaniment. Such mehfils have led to the formation of groups of professional and semi-professional singers, mostly within the community, and the publication of studio recordings of their arrangements in many of the major Khoja settlements worldwide, especially in India, Pakistan, and Canada.

A recent example of such studio-recorded gināns was circulated as part of a project in Karachi called "The Standardized Ginans," in which a unison chorus of several singers is accompanied by classical bamboo flute, sitar, cymbals, tabla, and drone. The project director, Dr. Haidar Alidina of Karachi, states that he has collected recordings of over three thousand ginān tunes throughout the world.[30] Based upon these vast collections, he has attempted to standardize the variant melodies of gināns in a process similar to the standardization of the religion that began in the nineteenth century, and of the

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texts of the gināns from the early twentieth century. He claims that although many of the original tunes have been lost, he could determine which version was the oldest and thus the most authentic by comparing the surviving variants. Alidina's presentation of the gināns include reference to the musical knowledge of the pīrs, and their use of music to express love of the Imam and other sentiments, a practice that would be considered undesirable in orthodox Muslim circles.[31] In the tapes, each ginān is preceded by an instrumental rāg and tāl interlude, a classical *bānsuri* ālāp by Ustad Salamat Hussein Khan is announced and played. One ginān on the cassette, "Ạvā Gurnār Sāmi Jine," is strongly redolent of rāg Sindhurā, which, as its name suggests, may have derived at some point from Sindh, where Isma'ili pīrs were active from the ninth century.[32] Its melody is typical of Kāfi or Sindhura, recalling at least one dhrūpad-style composition in the same rāg, and suggesting a degree of musical interaction with classical court traditions.[33] The refrain of this song is presented as Figure 4 below.

This is a moderately well-known ginān by Pir Sadr al-Din, the third major pīr to compose gināns.[34] Minor variations in the text are to be found among the five versions consulted, but I have noted only the most meaningful ones below, illustrating a historical process of evolution in progress. Some of these may be attributable to Islamization, as when Hindu words have been replaced, such as *shāh* (lord) to replace *Shām* (Krishna) and Sadruddin (the pīr's name) to replace Sohodev (his adopted Hindu name). Nevertheless, an unmistakably eclectic, rather than specifically Hindu or Muslim, devotional quality is retained, as in the epithet *miṭha Shāh,* "sweet Lord," which would constitute an unusual characterization of a Muslim saint or holy figure, and the Sanskrit *ananta* (bliss) chosen to replace the more exclusively Hindu *devtā* (denoting any male Hindu deity). In the presentation of its text here (from Shackle and Moir 1992:68–71), I have indicated some of the variations by using the following abbreviations: TBM: Shi'a Imami Isma'ili Tariqa Board of Mumbai; ITREB: Isma'ili Tariqa Religious Education Board, Karachi; GS: Gulzar Sukhiyani; SG: Standardized Gināns of Dr. Hyder Alidina; Ar: Arabic; Skt: Sanskrit; Pers: Persian (">" indicates variant)

Figure 4. ***Avā gurnār sāmi.*** **From** ***The Standardized Gināns, Volume 2.*** **Prepublication Edition, 1995.**

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Verse 1
Eji! Ąvā gurnār sāmi (Skt) jine srevie
Teto huaḍā shāhā (Pers) nā didāriā
Refrain:
Tam suṇ prit baṇdhāṇi
Evi (ruḍi - GS) prīt baṇdhāni miṭhā Shām (>shāh Pers. GS, SG) suṇ
Tam suṇ neheḍo (Skt) lāgo morā nāth (Skt) (>shāh GS) ji
Verse 2
Eji! Ąvā gurnar sāmi (Skt) sāthe
Jene jive yāriā; tene dil thaki duniā visāriyā
(Refrain)
Verse 3
Eji! Ąvā paṇj bhu vas kari
Chāre jug ni kalā gur (>sāni? TBM) ni joelā;
karoḍi tetris devatā (>ananta ITREB) (> ? SG) nā melā mānhe hoelā
(Refrain)
Verse 4
Eji! Ąvā pācham dise sāmi rājo āveā
Evā gurumukhe ginān (Ar. ginna, Skt. jnāna, gāna) sābhalāyā (>surāiyā - TBM) (>sabrāviya? SG)
(Refrain)
Verse 5
Eji! Pir boleā satgur sohodev[35] *(>Sadruddin TBM) sāriā*
Māre momane kuṇ beheshat (Pers. bihisht) didāriā
Verse 1
Oh! Devotedly serve such a Guide and Master
That you may achieve a vision of the Lord.
Refrain:
I (feminine) am bound to you by love, (have fallen in love with you - ITREB)
Bound by so great a love to my sweet (Dark One, Krishna) Lord.
It is with you that my ties are formed, my master.
Verse 2
Oh! The person who is with such a Guide
Lives in his friendship and forgets the world in his heart.
(Refrain)
Verse 3
By thus subduing the five passions [lust, anger, greed, allurement, pride]
His power is seen enduring through the four ages,
and one enters the company of the 330 million deities (blisses)
(Refrain)
Verse 4
Oh! Thus has the royal Guide appeared in the Western quarter.
This song/knowledge is announced through the Guide.
(Refrain)
Verse 5
The Pir has said, "The Divine Guide Sadruddin/Sahadev has remembered you,
My believers will be granted the vision of Paradise."

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Instrumentally-accompanied versions such as those presented in Alidina's recordings are permissible, but only outside ritual contexts. One such ginān is even portrayed accompaying classical South Indian devotional dance style on an Isma'ili website.[36] We do not know much about whether gināns were accompanied by instruments in ritual settings in the past, but if so, the practice has been discontinued, most likely out of consideration for the tenets and practices of the Muslim community worldwide, to whom Khojas wish to become closer.[37]

Non-Liturgical Devotion: Khoja Gīt

At some uncertain time in the twentieth century, but with origins many centuries ago, a genre of non-liturgical devotional songs emerged: the Khoja *gīt,* literally meaning "song," and here connoting a modernized, folk-derived, danced form of Muslim devotional music. Gīts are composed and performed by non-professional Khoja musicians for non-ritual contexts, such as celebrations, although their texts retain the sacred and mystical qualities of the gināns.[38] Some gīts are especially set to rhythms for dancing *ḍanḍiā, rās,* and *garbā,* Gujarati folk dances performed in counter-clockwise circles, in which dancers rhythmically strike one another's sticks and clap one another's hands. Studio-recorded cassettes of these songs are sponsored by local Isma'ili communities and widely circulated within the community worldwide, and are played for social gatherings, in homes, and while travelling in cars (Asani 1994:40). As in the gināns, western Indian languages such as Gujarati, Hindi, Sindhi, and Punjabi predominate, with sprinklings of Persian, and also Arabic, even including entire lines from the Quran, while others have been composed in Swahili and English (Asani 1994:42). Musical techniques occasionally resemble Hindi film songs, with their characteristic mix of South Asian folk and light-classical instruments with Western instruments, both acoustic and electronic. Musical materials include elements from traditional genres such as Urdu *ghazal,* qawwāli, and *zikr,* and occasional influences from East Africa, including *tarab* strains and lamellophone tracks. Choral unison singing and leader-chorus forms predominate, as in the gināns, but in a distinctly progressive and modern style. Disco-style Gujarati *lok gīt* (folksong) and folkdance genres like rās and ḍanḍiā are especially prevalent, for communal circle dancing is an important Khoja activity while listening to gīt. This practice recalls the *garbi ginān*s of Pir Shams, a cycle of songs that recount his participation in Hindu circle dance rituals of Navarātri. During the nine nights of the festival to the Mother Goddess described in the songs, he allegedly converted an entire village by singing his sermons and dancing with the Hindus (Kassam 1995:106f.). The cassette sleeve notes for one such gīt acknowledge the guidance of the directors of the ginān project

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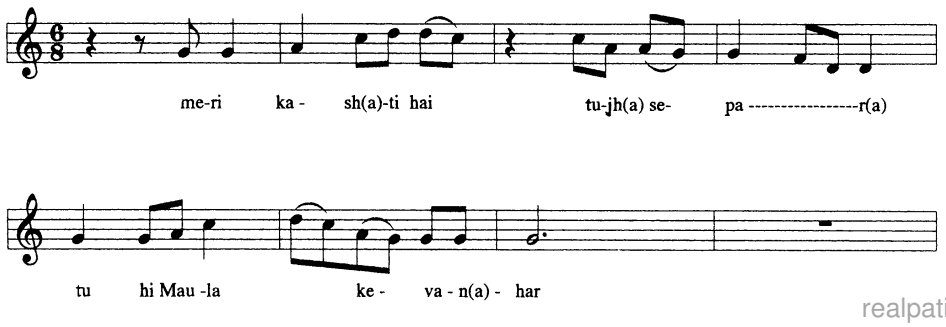
of ITREB, Karachi, showing a close connection between gīt and ginān traditions and practitioners. The song titled "Kashti" ("Boat") uses a common South Asian mystical metaphor of longing to reach the other shore, symbolizing union with God.[39] The guide, invoked as "Maula" (Hazar Imam, the Aga Khan) in the text, and destination are personified in the second verse as the Imam, Shah Karim, the present Aga Khan, whose name the "supplicant" sings repeatedly, suggesting a form of meditation through repeated incantation of a name (*jhap* or zikr). The rhythmic accompaniment of synthesized percussion and keyboard emphasizes the hemiola of Gujarati garbā, rās, and ḍanḍiā dances, a rhythm also found in ecstatic dance and music traditions in many parts of India, the Gulf, and East Africa.[40] As suggested by the garbi gināns, such songs might once have entered the ginān repertoire in the past, when boundaries between liturgy and devotion, and between gīt and ginān may have been less rigid (Ali Asani, p.c.) (see Figure 5).

Liturgical and Non-Liturgical Categories in Khoja and other South Asian Muslim Music

Regula Qureshi (1972:16) has outlined in chart form a set of distinctions between liturgical and non-liturgical Muslim musics in South Asia, which can provide an apt structure for examination and comparison of observations concerning Khoja ginān and gīt. Adaptation and expansion of this chart, as in Table 1 below, can highlight the distinctiveness of many Khoja practices, especially in the simultaneously liturgical *and* non-Quranic ginān form, which are otherwise mutually exclusive categories in Qureshi's Indo-Muslim model. Table 1 also highlights the dependence on context for the boundaries between liturgical and non-liturgical categories, such as when ginān functions as a devotional form outside the ritual context and the sacred space of the jama'at-khānah. On such occasions, when a ginān functions as a non-liturgical devotional form, it may also be accompanied by instruments, which ortho-

Figure 5. Gīt "Kashti" from *Dhanak*. Refrain.



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dox Muslims would not tolerate in the sacred space of the mosque, nor Isma'ilis in the jama'at-khānah. (Instruments are, of course, used in genres—especially qawwāli and *kāfis* of Shah Abdul Latif—which are performed in shrines to Sufi saints.) The chart also helps to visualize another departure from Qureshi's model: non-liturgical Khoja gīt, like qawwāli, but unlike ginān texts, may occasionally include entire lines from the "liturgical" Quran. For these reasons, perhaps it is better to reserve the term "liturgical" for music used in ritual contexts, "non-liturgical" for music used in non-ritual or devotional contexts, and to use the more culturally specific terms "Quranic" and "non-Quranic" to refer to specific Arabic texts.

Conclusions

The Khoja ginān can be seen as a syncretic liturgical and devotional form deriving elements from Hindu, Sufi, Isma'ili, and mainstream Muslim sources. As in the genres outlined in Qureshi's categories, the expression of religious emotion is central to the function, ontology, categorization, and meaning of both ginān and gīt, a quality shared with many South Asian devotional forms. However, the added element of expression of esoteric meaning of the Quran is crucial to the distinctiveness of ginān, just as the added element of physical embodiment of religious emotion through the evocation of dance is crucial to the identity of gīt. These elements may perhaps be productively compared with other Islamic liturgical and devotional traditions in future uses

Table 1. Qureshi: Indo-Muslim Music; Catlin: Khoja Ginān and Khoja Gīt

INDO-MUSLIM MUSIC (adapted from Qureshi)		
	"Liturgical" (i.e., Quranic)	**"Non-liturgical"**
Context:	azān, namāz, salām, qira't	majlis, qawwali, milad
Text:	Quran	vernacular poetry
Music:	mostly Middle-Eastern style	mostly South Asian style
INDO-MUSLIM MUSIC (Catlin-Jairazbhoy)		
	Khoja Ginan	**Khoja git**
Context:	liturgical in sacred space (the jama'at-khana) *and* non-liturgical elsewhere (mehfils, recordings)	non-sacred spaces
Text:	non-Quranic vernaculars, mixed verse forms	same, also with some Quranic excerpts
Music:	South Asian style, with some Arab elements; instruments only in non-sacred spaces	many instruments; South Asian, Western, and East African elements

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of Qureshi's now updated categorizations, and could be tested further, using a much larger body of examples of ginān and gīt.

The devotional Khoja gīt can be seen as a modernized continuation of the tradition established by Pir Shams, who danced with the Gujarati Hindus while singing his own songs of conversion. This assessment parallels a prevailing view among Satpanth Isma'ilis who adopt an evolutionary and historical stance toward their esoteric beliefs and external practices, and accept their reinterpretation by each successive Imam while retaining the most fundamental characteristics of the faith. Both ginān and gīt reflect attitudes toward music and dance that may well have originated from the time when Isma'ilis had their earliest and perhaps closest interactions with the Sufis. While some of the latter's musical practices continue their "heavy" musical and danced exaltations, Khojas have fostered the elements of a more "subtle" ecstasy in their gināns and a more energetically-embodied ecstasy in their danced gīts. Perhaps these two points can be seen along a continuum from "subtle" ecstasy to "heavy" ecstasy, with non-ecstatic musical states lying along various points in between. However they may be characterized and compared, the gināns constitute yet another remarkable and distinctive example of South Asian Hindu-Muslim syncretism. Until recently, these vernacular practices have been hidden from the gaze of outsiders, but now they are emerging into view during this period of transnational expansiveness, offering an unprecedented opportunity to learn more about these unique and profoundly beautiful musical expressions within the pluralistic mosaic that is Islam today.

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I wish to thank Professors Ali Asani, Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy, and Tazim Kassam for their salient comments on this article, first presented to the Society for Ethnomusicology, Detroit, in 2001. Professor Helen Rees also made constructive comments on an earlier version.

Notes

1. Shi'as accept the descendants of Ali as both socio-political and spiritual leaders. Historians believe the Isma'ili subdivision of Shi'ism began in the eighth and ninth centuries when Isma'il, the eldest son of the sixth Imam, was accepted as the seventh Imam by the Isma'ilis, subsequently called the Seveners. Others, later called the *Ithna'ashariyas,* or Twelvers, rejected Isma'il and followed Isma'il's younger brother, Musa (Hollister 1953:199–201). The Seveners recognized two interpretations of the Quran, one exoteric and one esoteric, whose mysteries could only be taught by an Imam and his dāis, or teachers. To escape persecution, Isma'ilis went into hiding for their next four imāms and founded a network, *da'wah,* that transmitted Isma'ilism into Persia, Yemen, North Africa, Palestine, Syria, the Hijaz, Sicily, and Sindh. Isma'ili power culminated in the Fatimid Islamic state, centered in Egypt, which flourished for two centuries, ca. 900–1100. The first Isma'ili missionary was sent by Fatimids of Yemen to Sindh around 883 (Kassam 1995:40–42). In the eleventh century a similar dispute over succession between broth-

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ers led to the split between followers of the elder brother, Nizar, called Nizaris, and his younger brother al Musta'lis, called Mustalians, predecessors of today's Bohras. As Kassam notes, neither Shi'sm nor Satpanth Isma'ilism has received adequate attention from scholars (1995:9ff.).

2. Pir Sadr al-Din is credited by Ivanov (who places him in the 14th–15th centuries) with naming the community khwājā, later becoming "Khoja," as well as with many organizational developments in the community. These include founding the first jama'at-khānahs (communal gathering places) and composing 218 gināns and 18 granths (book-length sung sacred texts) (in Asani 1991:3–4).

3. The source of this belief is reflected in the hadīth recited as the *qaul* sung at the beginning of traditional *qawwāli* concerts in a setting attributed to Amir Khusrau: *Man kuntu Mawlāhu, fa 'Aliyun mawlāhu*: "He whose master I am, Ali is also his master" which, according to Shi'a history, was spoken by the Prophet (Asani 1992:45).

4. Nizari or Eastern Isma'ilis have been known as Maulais or Mughis in Hunza, Mullais in the Central Asian highlands, Isma'iliya in Syria, Muridani Agha Khan in Iran, and Ali Ilahis in Afghanistan (Hollister 1953:396).

5. For background on current and historical activities of the Ismaili community, including radio and television, see the website Ismaili.net under FAIR: First All-Ismaili Radio and Television (accessed 12 December 2003).

6. Five CDs on Tajik traditional music have been announced. For details on publications, research funding, conferences, and education initiatives in Central Asia, see the website at http://www.akdn.org/Music (accessed 12 December 2003).

7. The religion is sometimes called "closed" today by its members, but conversion is possible in some situations. Although the Aga Khans have often married outsiders who converted, Isma'ilis no longer proselytize actively.

8. Aga Khan III represented India at the World Disarmament Conference in Geneva in 1932, and was appointed President of the League of Nations Assembly in 1937. One of the wealthiest businessmen in India today is a Khoja who owns WIPRO, an information technology corporation. Sometimes the final syllable of "boy" or "bhoy" reveals Khoja identity, but equally as often this is a Parsi suffix, as the British found both Parsis and Khojas to be compatible collaborators in the days of the East India Company and the Raj, when surname suffixes were evidently Anglicized from *bhāi,* "brother."

9. Mohammad Ali Jinna, founder of Pakistan, was born a Khoja, and the present Aga Khan's uncle, the late Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan (1933–2003), was chief of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees from 1965 to 1977.

10. These publications are often in Gujarati, and are usually produced through the Religious Education Boards (Shi'a Imami Isma'ili Tariqa Religious Education Boards, often abbreviated as ITREB) of local communities, such as the collections of the Kamaluddin family (1994?–99). Because my husband Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy was born into the Khoja community, I have been especially interested in Khoja Isma'ili practices, and my inquiries may have been received more openly for this reason.

11. For a listing of Isma'ili websites, see http://www.cybermurid.com/online/isites.html (accessed 12 December 2003).

12. *Ghinā'* connotes a melodic vocal style from that of Quranic cantillation, *taghbir, talḥin,* and *qirā'a* (Farmer 1957:439).

13. The signature line, *bhaṇitā* or *chāp,* a feature of South Asian sung poetry, usually includes an important statement, request, injunction, or religious truth, thus invoking the authority of the pīr.

14. See Asani 2002:34 for a summary of these views, and Kassam 1995:105, who notes, for example, that the garbis refer to pīrs who lived after Pir Shams, their supposed author.

15. Vaishnavites worship the Hindu deity Vishnu, whose nine incarnations include Rama and Krishna.

16. According to Kassam (1995:62), Pir Satgur Nur is regarded as the first pīr, sent between

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1162 and 1166 by Imam Hasan Shah. According to one legend relating Satgur Nur's arrival in a Gujarati Hindu village, the sound of his gināns caused all the images of Hindu deities to dance and play music, which resulted in the entire village and its king converting to Satpanth Isma'ilism (Gulshakar Sukhiyani, p.c.).

17. They are Pir Shams, Pir Sadruddin, Pir Hassan Kabir al-Din, and Sayyid Imam Shah (d. ca. 1516), whose founding of a schismatic sect resulted in his being referred to by Khojas by the lesser title of Sayyid, an honorific indicating descent from the Prophet (Asani 1995:268). Many of the Imam Shahi practices are particularly Hinduized, and have been renounced by other Khojas (Ahmad 1969:25).

18. The earliest extant manuscript is dated at 1735 (Asani 1991:11). See the Isma'ili Studies Center website http://www.iis.ac.uk (accessed 12 December 2003).

19. According to Asani (1987:443), "The script . . . was influential in the development of cohesion and self-identity within a widely scattered and linguistically diverse religious community . . . Khojki may have served the same purpose as the secret languages, such as the so-called *balabailān* language utilized by Muslim mystics to hide their more esoteric thoughts from the common people."

20. The Kadiwala Sayyids of Kadi, Kacch, were important composers of gināns. They claimed descent from Pir Hasan Kabir ad-Din (Asani 1991:4). The last composer was Sayyida Begum Shah Imam, the only known female author of gināns, who is remembered for accompanying herself on the *sārangi,* and for singing her compositions with the name of her Pīr, Hasan Shah (Asani 1991:4, 1992:273). She composed ten gināns still popular today. According to Asani (2002:34), she died in Karachi in 1866. Esmail (2002:13) states that she lived mostly around Bombay and died in Karachi sometime around 1900. See also Moir's article (1999) on Imam Begum.

21. From *Our Wonderful Tradition: Selected Ginans.* Al-Waez Rai Akbarali Babul, vocalist. Cassette G-8. Bombay: The Shi'a Imami Isma'ili Tariqah and Religious Education Board (ITREB) for India, Audio Visual Department, n.d.

22. Subba Rao (1956:70) claims Vasant Mukhāri to be a relatively recent borrowing from Karnatak music, where its corresponding melakarta, or scale category, (Vakulavāranam), also includes the relatively common rāg Ąhiri.

23. Bake's Karachi recordings dated 11 March 1939 are listed in his TEFI catalogue as follows:

83.4: Khoja devotional song, sung by 15 year old boy, Ghulam Hyder Jivan
83.5: Khoja devotional song, sung by 14 year old boy, Karim Ali Muhammad
83.6: Khoja devotional song, sung by 14 year old boy, Rahim Ali Muhammad,
83.7: Khoja devotional song, sung by Sadulli M. Abdulla
84.1: Khoja devotional song, sung in Persian by Ghulam Rishah Moh. Shah

Mr. Pyarali Keshwani (p.c.), then Religious Co-ordinator of the Isma'ili Tariqa and Religious Education Board, India, identified these as follows:

83.4: not familiar as ginān, tune sounds like a *nā't* (another devotional song-type)
83.5: "Satgur avya kai apne dwar" by Pir Shams, a well-known ginān
83.6: "Hamdil khaleq" by Pir Hasan Kabruddin, a well-known ginān
83.7: "Haq tu pāk tu" by Pir Shams
84.1: not familiar

All these recordings have been deposited in the UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive, the SOAS Library of the University of London, the Archives and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology of the American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi, the Isma'ili Studies Center, London, and the Isma'ili Tariqa Religious Education Board, Karimabad, Mumbai.

24. It is not clear, however, whether the song is an Isma'ili ginān or a Shi'a verse.

25. This song is number 83.7 in Bake's aforementioned catalogue. Pir Satgur Nur is regarded as the first pīr, sent between 1162 and 1166 by Imam Hasan Shah (Kassam 1995:62). Pir Shams was sent by the twenty-ninth Imam to the lands east of Persia in the thirteenth century, and is

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not to be confused with Shams-i Tabriz, d. ca. 1247 (Kassam 1995:81). The Isma'ili Pir Shams Sabzawari was born in Ghazni and was buried in Multan (Kassam 1995:85).

26. From *Ginān-e-Sharif Volume 1* (1996:1). English translation by Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy.

27. Aside from the two presented here, the third is of a child guiding a younger child; although not included here, it may be heard as number g44 on the Isma'ili website: http://Isma'ili.net/ginans/g44hak.html (accessed 12 December 2003). "Haq tun paak tun" is listed on this website as well as its text and translation, along with over two hundred other gināns, gīts, qawwālis, and other genres, with audio. A list of texts and recordings of granths is also provided on the site http://www.Isma'ili.net/ginans/ginanlist.html (accessed 12 December 2003).

28. E.g., Gulzar Sukhiyani, p.c.

29. The description is based on my observations of several daily and occasional rituals in Bombay and Kacch, Gujarat, 2000–03. My in-laws have occasionally taken me to attend these services in various jama'at-khānahs, with the prior permission of the presiding ritualists. Otherwise, as Kassam notes, non-Isma'ilis are not allowed to attend Sathpanth Isma'ili religious rites (1995:127).

30. In his narration on the first pre-publication tape, Alidina (1995) states that he found ten to fifteen variants of each ginān, and notated them all in *sargam* (syllabic notation).

31. He states that the Pir Sadruddin had good knowledge of music, as evidenced in the ginān "Til bār Tulnā," with its use of the half-step intervals S-Rb and S-N of rāg Kalingra in order to evoke the image of a tiny grain in the text (Alidina 1995, Volume 2).

32. See, e.g., Kaufmann 1968:374–78. This ginān can also be heard as number c22 on the website: http://www.Isma'ili.net/granths/c22 (accessed 12 December 2003). Another ginān on the same cassette, attributed to Pir Hasan Kabiruddin, is in the same mode.

33. Sitarist Ustad Imrat Khan, upon hearing the first line of this ginān melody, immediately sang to me a Sindhura dhrūpad taught to him by Maharaj Shamsher Bahadur around 1950. Gulzar Sukhiyani, an Isma'ili living in America, kindly agreed to teach me the ginān as she had learned it from her mother Gulshakar Poonja Sukhiyani, a Khoja of Kacchi ancestry living at various times in East Africa, Bangladesh, and the United States. Gulzar made a cassette of her own solo rendition, wrote the transliterated text and translation first in her handwriting, and then typed it using Shackle and Moir (1992:68–71). I am grateful for her generous help. It was after learning to sing an unmetered version of this ginān, and partly because of it, that I was invited to attend evening rituals at different jama'at-khānahs in Bombay.

34. He was sent from Khorasan by the Nizāri Imam, Islam Shah (d. ca. 1480). Sadr al-Din is regarded as the author of "Das Avatār," the ginān that propounds Ali as the tenth incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu (Kassam 1995:33).

35. Khojas believe Sadruddin's former incarnation to have been Sahadev, the youngest Pandava brother in Mahabharata epic.

36. The ginān "Ab teri mohabbat lagi," by Pir Shams, was sung in rāg Bhairavi, on FAIR-TV, danced by an unnamed female Bharata Natyam dancer, accompanied by live classical musicians, videotaped in India in 1987.

37. Gulzar Sukhiayani, p.c. Kassam (1995:4) refers to a resolution passed in 1975 at the first International Association of Isma'ilis in Canada, prohibiting the use of musical instruments in the jama'at-khānah.

38. To hear examples of gīt and other genres (qawwāli, including one example that refers to Palestine, as well as Tajik music) see http://Ismaili.net/ginans/ginanlist/html (accessed 12 December 2003).

39. From the cassette titled *Dhanak* ("Treasure") (n.d.).

40. Prevalent in communal dances to the Mother Goddess, especially at Navarātri, the two-against-three meter is known as *hinc* or *ek tāli* in Gujarat (Thompson 2000:627). Sidi African-Indians of Gujarat dance their *dammāl* to such alternating twelve-beat patterns they call *tambol,* from Bantu/Swahili *tambol,* "to swagger, return victoriously from a hunt." For examples and discussion, hear, read, and see Catlin-Jairazbhoy 2002, 2003, and 2004.

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